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SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS
COMMUNICATIONS

NEWS

CONTACT: SEDGWICK COUNTY COMMUNICATIONS 316-660-9370 FAX: 316-383-7509

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Contact: Kristi Zukovich
316-660-9370

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sedgwick County Fire District Observes Arson Awareness Week

(Sedgwick County, Kansas) – The United States Fire Administration (USFA) and the International Association of Arson Investigators have teamed up to promote arson awareness around the country.

May 4-10, 2003 has been designated National Arson Awareness Week, to raise America's consciousness of this most costly of all fires and the steps that are being taken to combat it. This year's theme is "**Arson is NOT a Victimless Crime.**"

The USFA and the IAAI would like to educate the public on arson and also get them involved in how they can help by reporting suspicious activities, seeking help for children involved in fire setting and reducing fire setting opportunities.

Each year there are over 500 civilian lives lost to arson fires. The cost of property damaged from intentionally set fires is almost 2 billion dollars.

"The Sedgwick County Fire District wants people to know that there are ways to prevent arson fires," said Sedgwick County Commission Chairman Tim Norton.

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The Sedgwick County Fire District suggests these steps to reduce incidents of arson:

- If you know or suspect that an arson crime has been committed, contact your local fire or police department.
- If you suspect a child is setting fires notify the proper authorities, it may not be “just a phase” they are going through. Keep matches and lighters out of sight of young children.
- Report suspicious activity near houses or other buildings to the local police and support Neighborhood Watch programs.
- Keep leaves, firewood, overgrown brush, shrubbery and other combustibles away from buildings. Most arson fires are started outdoors. Don’t make it easy for an arsonist to start a fire or easy for an outdoor fire to spread to a building.
- Keep doors and windows locked when a building is unoccupied. But don’t use double cylinder deadbolt locks without keeping a key nearby, bars without quick release mechanisms, or other security provisions that could trap a person in a building with a deadly fire.

It is important to remember, **"Arson is NOT a Victimless Crime!"**

For additional information on arson prevention, call the International Association of Arson Investigators, Inc. (314) 739-4224 or your local or state chapter at (316) 744-0471.

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